

Deepening our relationship with Prāṇāyāma deepens our relationship with Āsana.....



One aspect of Yoga [Sādhana](#) is that it is ultimately about a maturing of our relationship with all aspects of on the mat (and seat) Yoga practice, rather than just a maturing of our [Āsana](#) practice.

*"Are we confusing the maturation of our Āsana practice with the maturation of our Yoga practice?"*

This is especially relevant if we consider these various aspects as existing within a holarchy. This implies that one "level", here [Āsana](#); whilst being the foundation, technical reference point, verification and ladder for the next "level", here [Prāṇāyāma](#); also remains interdependent with it. Thus [Āsana](#) is correspondingly influenced by the insights that arise from [Prāṇāyāma](#) as we work towards a transition from [Bāhya Aṅga Sādhana](#) towards [Antar Aṅga Sādhana](#).

*"Āsana is the primary choice to work the breath.  
Prāṇāyāma is the primary choice to refine the breath."*

For example, fully embracing [Prāṇāyāma](#) as a [Sādhana](#) is initially founded on the core principles that underpin an intelligent relationship with [Āsana](#). This foundation helps to seed insights that are unique to [Prāṇāyāma](#) practice. These insights in turn both deepen our relationship with [Prāṇāyāma](#) as well as refreshing and further deepening our relationship with [Āsana](#).

*"In the beginning, the breath in Āsana sets the direction for our Prāṇāyāma practice.  
As we develop this, the breath in Prāṇāyāma sets the direction for our Āsana practice."*

We only have to study and reflect on the [Yoga Sūtra](#) to appreciate this bidirectional relationship dynamic. Yet it increasingly appears that for many today the word 'advancing' in terms of on the mat practice means tackling increasingly complex [Āsana](#), or [Āsana](#) choreographies to the neglect or even detriment of what are seen as the "levels" that [Āsana](#) aims to prepare us to engage in.

*"Just because a person can achieve the form of the Āsana, we can't presume they will also achieve the experience of the Āsana."*

Krishnamacharya understood this relationship dynamic and offered many teachings, tools and practices to help link the student in their subtle refinement of the [Sādhana](#) holarchy, with its interdependent and bidirectional hierarchical relationship. Such was his grasp of Yoga that it would be a misunderstanding and misrepresentation if he is remembered only as the 'father' of modern [Āsana](#), within a world that predominantly perceives Yoga as the practice of [Āsana](#).

*"According to the teachings of Krishnamacharya,  
you must first change the mind in order to meditate,  
rather than trying to meditate in order to change the mind."*

However, in this age of students 'catching' [Āsana](#) classes within large sticky oriented groups on the way to, or from, or in their lunchtime, or as an alternative to the gym, or as a favoured stress antidote, I wonder.

*"It increasingly appears that Yoga has been acculturated into the fitness mindset  
rather than fitness being acculturated into the Yoga mindset."*

For example, choosing to spend as much time with [Prāṇāyāma](#) as with [Āsana](#) is not that appealing as a transformative tool. Yet this is exactly what Krishnamacharya intended as our personal Yoga [Sādhana](#) matures. For example he taught that as our Yoga practice matures, the student needs to spend as long with their [Prāṇāyāma](#) element of their practice as with their [Āsana](#) element. In this age of dominance of physical cultural activities or meditational mindbite practices I wonder at its attractiveness.

*"One of the major tools in bringing or refining  
the level of observation to the subtler aspects  
of our physical, energetic, mental and emotional  
patterns is Prāṇāyāma."*

This is further complicated by the fact that a maturation of the fruits of [Prāṇāyāma](#) takes many years to appreciate. That's how it is, some plants grow and show their fruits quickly and some take years to mature and blossom, [Prāṇāyāma](#) belongs to the latter category.

Do we have a real and biding interest in these slow blooming practices of Yoga? Within this abiding interest do we have the commitment, intention, patience and perseverance to spend years gardening with the techniques and practices of [Prāṇāyāma](#) in order to enjoy the fruits?

*"As Prāṇāyāma dissolves the covering of the light,  
fitness of the mind for concentration arises."*

Furthermore, there are many, many resources, within all levels of live or virtual media sources to explore the practices and performances of [Āsana](#). Do we have the same teaching resources to support our exploration of [Prāṇāyāma](#)? Here it does increasingly appear that given the current Yoga gym, studio, fitness, physical based society led imaging, within which [Āsana](#) has become synonymous with Yoga, this support potential is increasingly disidentified with the modern social perception of what is Yoga.

*"Yoga Practice needs a Mat and a Map,  
of the two the more important question is,  
what Map are you using, rather than,  
what Mat are you using."*

The side effect of this is a disinterest at least, perhaps a token twiddle at most, in both the introduction and development of [Prāṇāyāma](#) as one of our primary Yoga practices, along with a dearth of modern support resources. Perhaps we are now seeing the accumulative outcome of successive generations of [Āsana](#) dominant classes and subsequent [Āsana](#) dominated teacher training priorities?